

December 13, 2019

INTERESTING FLU SEASON SO FAR; GOOD NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VACCINATION



Contact:

Kevin Watler
kevin.watler@flhealth.gov
(813) 559-4065

Hillsborough County, Fla. – Flu activity typically peaks between December and February, and it can last as late as May. In Florida, the season usually peaks between January and March. However, across the Tampa Bay region this season's activity has seen an increase earlier than in previous years.

There is some good news for those who got this season's flu shot. The main type of flu virus we have seen circulating so far is contained in this year's flu vaccine. This means those who got the flu shot this season have a higher chance of not getting ill with the most dominant strain that is circulating.

It's important to also be aware that there are other flu strains circulating and there's no way to have complete protection, but the flu shot can reduce the severity and/or risk of getting ill. The flu season will continue for several more months, so there is still time to protect yourself and your family by getting the flu shot.

The flu can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu infection can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as young children, the elderly and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk for serious complications from the flu. Some children are at especially high risk for flu-related complications: children less than 5 years old, American Indian and Alaskan Native children, and children with chronic health problems.

Unfortunately, there have been two flu-associated pediatric deaths in Florida this season, both in children who didn't receive this year's flu shot. Flu-associated pediatric deaths are reported most often in unvaccinated children with underlying health conditions. Last season, six flu-associated pediatric deaths were reported in Florida, and all occurred in children who were not fully vaccinated. Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce a child's risk of dying from flu by 60%. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu).

In Hillsborough County, we have seen several outbreaks in schools throughout the county. The Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County has partnered with Hillsborough County Public Schools to offer free flu shots. Any child in the county can come to one of the clinics and get a free flu shot. Flu clinics were already offered at Sickles High School and King High School.

The upcoming clinics will take place:

December 14th at Jefferson High School, 4401 Cypress St, Tampa, FL 33607 from 9-11 a.m.

December 17th at Riverview High School, 11311 Boyette Rd, Riverview FL 33569 from 5-7 p.m.

December 19th at Plant City High School, One Raider Place, Plant City, FL 33563 from 5-7 p.m.

Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Yearly flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu or flu-like illness, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading germs to others. In addition, there are prescription medications called antiviral drugs that can be used to treat influenza illness.

You can also get a vaccine at your local health department. For more information call:

Citrus: (352) 527-0068
Hardee: (863) 773-4161
Hernando: (353) 540-6800 (Ages 17 and under only)
Highlands: (863) 386-6040
Hillsborough: (813) 307-8000
Manatee: (941) 748-0747
Pasco: (727) 619-0300
Pinellas: (727) 824-6900
Polk: (863) 519-7900
Sarasota: (941) 861-2900

###